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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NAIROBI 001299

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AF/E FOR SUSAN DRIANO, LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/28/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [KE](#)
SUBJECT: U.S. REACTS TO THREATENING LETTERS TO MEMBERS OF
PARLIAMENT

Classified By: Ambassador Michael E. Ranneberger for reasons 1.4
(B and D)

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) A Member of Parliament (MP) on June 18 claimed in Parliament that he had received a letter implicating the First Lady of Kenya and high GOK officials in a plot to kill him and seven others, including one former and three current MPs. The presidential press service and the police spokesman attacked the claim as propaganda and dismissed the letter out of hand. We obtained a copy of the letter on June 19. It is unclear whether the letter is credible, but the level of detail it contained prevents us from summarily dismissing it given the continuing threats to human rights defenders and the publication of the U.N. Special Rapporteur's report that criticized police involvement in extrajudicial killings. The Ambassador released on June 19 a press statement calling for a credible investigation of the letter (see para. 5). The press statement received wide play in the media that evening and in the following days. The Minister of Internal Security and Provincial Administration on June 19 announced that police had initiated an investigation into the letter and were evaluating the threat. We do not rule out the possibility that the letter could be a hoax. We will continue to follow the issue and to engage with the affected MPs. End Summary.

MPs Receive Threatening Letter

¶2. (C) On June 18, Member of Parliament (MP) Gitobu Imanyara introduced a letter on the floor of Parliament, claiming that it implicated the First Lady of Kenya, Police Commissioner Hussein Ali, Head of the Civil Service Francis Muthaura, Minister of Environment John Michuki, and Trade Minister Amos Kimunya in compiling a list of eight persons to be liquidated. The letter was addressed to MP Martha Karua. The letter stated that current MPs Imanyara, Boni Khalwale, and Ferdinand Waititu and former MP Paul Muite were on the list. Imanyara stated that he had received a copy of the letter in his pigeonhole in Parliament. In raising the letter on the floor of Parliament, Imanyara requested a ruling from Deputy Speaker Farah Maalim, who was presiding over the session, on the letter. Maalim promised a ruling on June 24.

¶3. (U) That evening presidential spokesman Isayia Kabira issued a statement accusing Imanyara of being the author of the letter and accused Imanyara of grandstanding and being "reckless." The police spokesman also called the allegations cheap political propaganda.

14. (C) On June, 19 MP Boni Khalwale provided us with a copy of the letter, which was handwritten on letterhead from the Office of the President. The letter is signed by a Wilfred Njenga, who claims to be written by a member of the Kwekwe squad which was formed to kill suspected Mungiki members (Reftel D). Its stated intent is to provide a warning to Martha Karua that she and the others are targeted. However, the letter contains specific allegations of police involvement in extrajudicial killings that corroborate information given by a police informant for the Kenyan National Commission for Human Rights. (Note: The informant went into hiding and was murdered in October 2008. No one has ever been arrested in the killing. End Note.) Khalwale noted that he, Muite, Imanyara, Karua, and Waititu had all publicly criticized police involvement in extrajudicial killings and speculated that this might be a motive for the threats. He told us that he was unsure of the provenance of the letter, but that he took the threat seriously.

Embassy Press Statement

15. (SBU) Despite the letter's unknown origin, the level of detail it contained prevented us from summarily dismissing it, especially given the continuing threats to human rights defenders (Reftel A and B) and the publication of the U.N. Special Rapporteur's report that criticized police involvement in extrajudicial killings (Reftel C). In the face of the government's summary dismissal of the letter and its contents, and in order to spur a credible determination of the threat posed by the letter, the

NAIROBI 00001299 002 OF 002

Ambassador on June 19 issued the following press statement:

Begin text

The United States Government is deeply concerned about death threats which have been made against the Honorable Martha Karua, the Honorable Boni Khalwale, the Honorable Gitobu Imanyara, and the Honorable Ferdinand Waititu. These threats must be taken seriously by the Kenyan government. They should be fully and credibly investigated and, if found credible, those involved should be held accountable. It is not acceptable to dismiss these threats out of hand.

These latest threats come at a time of considerable intimidation and threats against civil society and human rights activists. The threats occur at a time when the UN Special Rapporteur has called attention to the reality of extrajudicial killings in Kenya, and at a time when the international community has urged action to stop extrajudicial killings.

The Kenyan government should act responsibly and transparently. The U.S. Government is closely following this situation, and expects credible action to be taken.

End Text.

GOK Follow-up

16. (U) The press statement received wide play on the evening news on June 19 and in the newspapers on June 20. Minister of Internal and Provincial Administration Security George Saitoti held a press conference whereby he claimed that the letter had been investigated. Saitoti stated that the letterhead was a fake and that there is no Wilfred Njenga in the police force. He further claimed that handwriting analysis had concluded that the author of the letter had also written a series of other fraudulent letters claiming to be a government official. Saitoti told the press that he had instructed the Police Commissioner to investigate

the matter to identify and arrest the perpetrator.

Comment

17. (SBU) The provenance of, and motives for writing, the letter is still unclear. However, the government's knee-jerk dismissal of the letter without a proper evaluation of the whether it represented a credible threat was unacceptable. We will continue to raise the issue of the GOK's ongoing responsibility to protect human rights defenders and those speaking out against extrajudicial killings with our government contacts. End Comment.
RANNEBERGER